



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JOSHUA

Study 10: CIRCUMCISED ISRAEL AND THE DIVINE CAPTAIN Joshua 5:1-15

The events of this chapter formed a landmark in the new life of Israel and in the ministerial career of Joshua. They had just left the wilderness behind, and walked through river Jordan, which had been divided miraculously. This great victory at Jordan struck terror and fear in the hearts of the Canaanites. **“And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites ... and all the kings of the Canaanites ... heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, ... that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel”** (Joshua 5:1). The crossing of Jordan was a confirmation that Israel would conquer Canaan.

In this chapter, we also learn of the circumcision of the children of Israel. It was a renewal of their covenant with God and here God said, **“This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you”** (Joshua 5:9). It is remarkable that they began to taste of the fruit of the Promised Land. **“And they did eat of the old corn of the land..... and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year”** (Joshua 5:11,12). Also in this chapter, the Israelites kept the Passover in obedience to the Lord, to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. At the end of the chapter **“the Captain of the LORD’s host”** came from heaven and appeared to Joshua, assuring him of complete victory. What a chapter, what a landmark! (1) The **Canaanites** are terrified, (2) The **Covenant of** circumcision is renewed, (3) The **Condition, cause and consequences** of the reproach of Egypt are all rolled away, (4) The **Celebration** of the Passover takes place, (5) There is **Cessation** of manna, their food in the wilderness which they ate for forty years, (6) The **Commencement** of eating the fruit of the Promised Land, (7) The **Conquering Captain** from heaven arrives to lead God’s people to victory. There is so much instruction and encouragement in the chapter and it is our privilege to participate with obedient Israel in faith and faithfulness so we can begin to eat the fruit of the land of promise.

RENEWED COVENANT THROUGH CIRCUMCISION AND PURITY

Joshua 5:1-9; Genesis 17:10-14; Exodus 12:48; Jeremiah 9:26; 6:10; Ezekiel 44:7,9; Acts 7:51; Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:28,29; Colossians 2:11,12.

“At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel” (Joshua 5:2). Truly, God’s ways are not our ways. Humanly speaking, this was not the right time to circumcise the men of war in Israel. No man would have advised Joshua to carry out a general circumcision of the children of Israel at this time. Simeon and Levi had taken advantage of such general circumcision to overcome the Shechemites (Genesis 34:24,25). What a testing of Joshua’s faith was this: that all the males of Israel should now be weakened and incapacitated for fighting. The submission of all the men of Israel was a great evidence of their faith in the promise and protection of God. We must not neglect to obey God or to hesitate and delay our obedience because of the fear of consequences. Simple faith like Joshua’s leads us to implicit obedience without considering probable consequences or human expediencies. There will be no delay or hesitation in making restitution, leaving a sinful business, separation from right-hand men or bosom-friend women who cause us to sin continually, obedience to the revealed will and Word of God if we truly want to enter into the Promised Land.

Even in the Old Testament, God who **“desirest truth in the inward parts”** required much more from Israel than outward circumcision. **“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your HEART, and be no more stiff-necked”** (Deuteronomy 10:16) **“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your HEART”** (Jeremiah 4:4). Spiritual circumcision is the cleansing of the heart. Our affections must be divorced from evil and united to that which is good. In obedience to God’s command to circumcise ourselves we confess and forsake our stubbornness, being stiff-necked, hardness of heart, resistance to God’s will, disobedience to God’s Word, love and affection for the world, self-will, reproach and rebellion of Egypt.

Then by the miracle of grace, God takes away the love of sin and implants a love of holiness in our hearts. **“The LORD thy God will circumcise thine HEART... to love the LORD thy God with all thine HEART”** (Deuteronomy 30:6). **“Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter”** (Romans 2:29). As we consecrate our hearts and lives to the Lord, He brings us into a deeper relationship and covenant with Him, circumcises and sanctifies our hearts so that we may love Him more and serve him in holiness without blemish all the days of our life.

REDEEMED ISRAEL CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER

Joshua 5:10-12; Exodus 12: 12-14, 24-27, 48; Numbers 9:1-5; Matthew 26:17-20, 26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Nehemiah 9:20,21; Deuteronomy 6:10,11.

What was later said to another and his fellows might truly be said to this Joshua and this generation of Israel: **“Hear now, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are MEN WONDERED AT”**(Zechariah 3:8). The Canaanites must have seen Joshua and Israel as **“peculiar people”**, as **“men wondered at”**. After God had wrought a spectacular miracle for them at Jordan, they did not immediately rush ahead to conquer and possess the land. As God’s peculiar people they did not act by carnal wisdom but were regulated by spiritual considerations. Their eyes were on the Word of God and their concern was to be obedient to divine appointments. **“And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, WHEN YE BE COME TO THE LAND which the LORD will give you, according as He hath promised, that YE SHALL KEEP THIS SERVICE. It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S Passover”** (Exodus 12: 24,25,27). Israel’s keeping of the Passover, like the circumcision of the people, was an act of obedience to the Lord. The Israelites did not wait for **“a convenient season”** (Act 24:25) before obeying the Lord. Unless we conform to the Word of God without compromise and without waiting for our convenience, our obedience of convenience and expediency will not be acceptable to God.

<*Body Text>“And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land: neither had the children of Israel manna any more; they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year” (Joshua 5:12). This supply of corn upon Israel’s entrance into Canaan was the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel. The Lord promised to give them **“great and goodly cities which thou buildest not, and houses full of good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not”** (Deuteronomy 6: 10,11). Miracle of manna ceased when natural corn was available! We are not to expect extraordinary, supernatural acts of God when there is an ordinary, natural way to meet the need. God does not work unnecessary miracles! The deliverance of Peter in answer to prayer is an appropriate illustration here. **“The angel of the Lord came upon him ... And his chains fell off from his hands. The iron gate that leadeth unto the city opened to them of his own accord”** (Acts12:7-10). That was a miracle. But the angel left Peter on the streets – free but not safe! **“And when he had considered the thing”, he went to the house of Mary, “and Peter knocked at the door of the gate ... but Peter continued knocking” until “they opened the door”** (Act 12:12-16). The other gate could only be opened supernaturally but this door was to be opened naturally. While believing in miracles, let us continue to also accept normal, natural supplies as provision from the Hands of our faithful God.

REASSURANCE OF THE CAPTAIN WITH DIVINE POWER

Joshua 5:13-15; Exodus 23:22,23; 15:3; Psalm 24:8; Revelation 2:12,16; 2 Chronicles 20:15-18; Isaiah 55:4; Psalm 44:1-5.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His Hand” (Joshua 5:13). In obedience to the Lord and honour for His glory, Joshua had circumcised the people and made them to keep the Passover. And now **“the Captain of the host of the LORD”** came to him to encourage, strengthen and assure him of victory in the conquest of the land of Canaan. **“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will MANIFEST Myself to him”** (John 14:21). This is exactly what the Lord was doing unto obedient Joshua here. Our obedience brings divine manifestations but when we are disobedient to God we deprive ourselves of divine, spiritual manifestations to our souls. When Joshua saw the **“Man”**, he die not flee, neither did he draw out his own sword to engage him in battle. **“Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?”** (Joshua 5:13). From the answer, Joshua discovered that this **“Man with His sword**

drawn in His Hand” was the Lord Himself, **“a Man of war”**. **“The LORD is a Man of war: the LORD is His name”** (Exodus 15:3).

“And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did WORSHIP, and said unto Him, what saith my Lord unto His servant?” (Joshua 5:14). If this **“Captain of the host of the LORD”** had been only an angel, he would have rebuked Joshua for worshipping Him (Revelation 19:10; 22:8,9). This Person accepted worship, proving His Deity. The Lord, Jesus Christ, Himself had revealed Himself to Joshua as the conquering Captain that can never lose any battle. Nothing could stand before the Captain of the LORD's host. What was there for Israel to fear when the conquering Lord Himself was the One leading them to battle? What an encouragement to Joshua! What an encouragement to our faith this is!

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You can email the pastor@deeperlife-liverpool.org.uk with your comments.*